

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 2806

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, JM
SUBJECT: RUMORS REGARDING JAMAICAN CABINET CHANGES

1. WHILE SPECULATION IN THE MEDIA AND IN SOME POLITICAL CIRCLES ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT IS GROWING (SEPTEL), I LOOK ON IT AS A NON-STARTER FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, RUMORS ALL OVER TOWN ABOUT IMMINENT OR NEAR-IMMINENT CABINET CHANGES. GIVEN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE IN JAMAICA, ALL THESE RUMORS ARE SUFFICIENTLY PLAUSIBLE TO BE FULFILLED. THEY ARE AS FOLLOWS: MICHAEL MANLEY TO TAKE OVER THE PORTFOLIO OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN ADDITION TO RETAINING THE PRIME MINISTER-SHIP; P. J. PATTERSON (PRESENT FOREIGN MINISTER) TO REPLACE DANNY WILLIAMS AS MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES AND COMMERCE; WILLIAMS TO BE DUMPED; ARNOLD BERTRAM (CURRENTLY LEFTIST MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION AND CULTURE IN PM'S OFFICE) TO TAKE ERIC BELL'S FORMER POSITION OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION WHILE RETAINING HIS PRESENT RESPONSIBILITIES. IF TOO MUCH OPPOSITION TO BERTRAM

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DEVELOPS WITHIN MODERATE ELEMENT OF PNP, MINISTER OF EDUCATION PORTFOLIO MIGHT GO TO EITHER MULLINGS (PRESENTLY MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT), OR TO FORMER FINANCE MINISTER DAVID COORE, UNLESS COORE PREFERS AMBASSADORSHIP TO U.S., OR PREFERS TO REMAIN WITHOUT MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES. SINCE MANLEY'S PNP DETRACTORS HAVE YET TO CONCLUDE THAT THEY CAN EMBARK

ON A POWER-GRAB WITH CONFIDENCE MANLEY'S VIEWS ON CABINET RE-SHUFFLING WILL MOST LIKELY PREVAIL. HE HAS BEEN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY SILENT, SO WE WILL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE. THE REASONING ABOUT SOME OF THE RUMORS GOES LIKE THIS:

2. WITH REGARD TO MANLEY: HE IS LOSING HIS HOLD ON THE JAMAICA POPULACE, BUT STILL HAS ENOUGH FOR THE PNP TO NEED HIM. DISENCHANTMENT WITH MANLEY IS VISIBLY GROWING BECAUSE OF THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND PAST RHETORIC AND PROMISES. FEELING IS GROWING THAT HIS PRIMARY INTEREST SEEMS TO BE TO BUILD AN INTERNATIONAL IMAGE FOR HIMSELF AND THAT IT IS A RATIONALIZATION THAT IF MANLEY SUCCEEDS IN A MAJOR BREAK-THROUGH IN NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, JAMAICA WILL BE PRINCIPAL GAINER. WITH JAMAICA FACING ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, FEELING IS THAT THE COUNTRY CANNOT WAIT FOR MANLEY'S STRATEGY TO WORK. NEEDED IS A LEADER WHO CAN RE-BUILD ECONOMY OF JAMAICA IN SHORTEST TIME POSSIBLE AND TO GENERATE OVERSEAS CONFIDENCE IN JAMAICA'S ECONOMIC STABILITY. TAKING ON FONMINISTRY WOULD TAKE UP A LOT OF HIS ENERGY, WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS THIRD WORLD IMAGE, AND WOULD PERMIT MORE SCOPE FOR HIM TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS ALLEGED "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, TRUDEAU AND SCHMIDT. MANLEY WOULD THEN REDUCE HIS GRIP ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS, TURNING MOST DECISIONS OVER TO ERIC BELL AND PATTERSON WHO HAVE REPUTATION FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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PERFORMANCE. RUMORS ARE FURTHER EMBELLISHED THAT BY SEPTEMBER WHEN NEXT PNP CONVENTION TAKES PLACE, AND IF COUNTRY SHOWS PROGRESS ECONOMICALLY, MANLEY MAY BE EASED OUT AND REPLACED BY EITHER BELL OR PATTERSON. ALSO RECURRING IS THE RUMOR THAT MANLEY'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO REPLACE WALDHEIM AS SEC GEN OF UN.

3. WITH REGARD TO BERTRAM: HIS POSTURE WITH THE PNP MODERATES IS IMPROVING, BUT HIS CLOSENESS TO CUBA AND HIS VIEWS REGARDING THE MEDIA (--IT SHOULD BE CONTROLLED--) STILL GENERATES HOSTILITY BY THE JLP OPPOSITION AND SUSPICION BY MANY WITHIN THE PNP. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ERIC BELL WHEN MINISTER OF EDUCATION WAS THE ONLY MINISTER TO SUCCESSFULLY RESIST MANLEY'S INSISTENCE THAT CUBAN COUNTERPARTS HELP THE JAMAICAN MINISTERS FORMULATE THEIR FIVE-YEAR PLANS. FEAR IS THAT AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION HE WILL OPEN THE DOORS TO CUBAN INFLUENCE. OBSERVERS LOOK UPON HIS CANDIDACY AS A TEST OF MANLEY'S STRENGTH WITHIN THE PNP.

4. WITH REGARD TO DANNY WILLIAMS: HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO RESTORE PRIVATE SECTOR CONFIDENCE NOR HAS HE BEEN ABLE TO "SELL THE MERITS" OF THE STATE TRADING

CORPORATION. MUCH CONFUSION EXISTS WITHIN THE BUSINESS SECTOR WITH ACCUSATIONS THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO COORDINATE HIS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD A CONSISTENT OR NON-CONTRADICTORY PATTERN.

5. WITH REGARD TO COORE: THE GENERAL FEELING IN TOWN IS THAT HE HAS BEEN MADE "THE SCAPEGOAT FOR MANLEY'S FAILURES." HOWEVER, HE STANDS HIGH WITH THE RANK AND FILE OF BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES AND CAN PROBABLY DEMAND AND RECEIVE ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT. WITH REGARD TO WASHINGTON, AMBASSADOR RATTRAY HAS MADE IT KNOWN THAT HE WANTS TO REMAIN AS AMBASSADOR TO U.S.

6. COMMENT: KINGSTON IS A PLACE WHERE RUMORS ARE A
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WAY OF LIFE BUT THERE INDEED ARE SIGNS OF DISCENCHANTMENT WITH MANLEY BOTH WITHIN THE PNP AND ON THE STREET. SOME OR ALL OF THE CABINET CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE (EXCLUDING CHANGE OF PRIME MINISTER) IF THEY MATERIALIZE, WILL NOT CAUSE ANY MAJOR POLITICAL DISTURBANCES IN THE COUNTRY. THE CHANGE THAT COULD CREATE THE MOST DIFFICULTY WOULD BE THE ONE INVOLVING BERTRAM BECAUSE OF HIS IDEOLOGICAL BENT. THE MINISTER WHO HAS THE GREATEST UNIVERSAL RESPECT TODAY SEEMS TO BE ERIC BELL. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE MOVING TOWARD A MORE PRAGMATIC APPROACH. THE DETERIORATING ECONOMY HAS THEM RUNNING SCARED.
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